Making of a Scientist: Images and Reality

Public Lecture Series, Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

7:00 pm, Thursday, November 10, 2005
NASA Goddard Visitor Center Auditorium

The Immortality Factor

Dr. Kathie Olsen

Deputy Director, National Science Foundation

Abstract

"Making of a Scientist" is a new public lecture series featuring some of the most remarkable and inspiring women in space, science and scientific leadership. As the opening lecturer, we bring you Dr. Kathie Olsen, a dynamic speaker, a neuroscientist who has done fascinating work on neural and genetic mechanisms underlying differences in the development and expression of the behavior of men and women, and one of the most senior science policy leaders of the nation.

Dr. Olsen will talk about her journey of becoming a scientist and her multi-faceted career in science and science policy which spans academia, federal agencies, the Hill, and the White House. She will discuss how other women like her still face a number of challenges in scientific and technical careers, even though the number of women entering these careers has increased dramatically. Women continue to have generally lower salaries than their male counterparts and tend to advance more slowly in their careers, particularly in tenure-track faculty positions. However, the gaps are narrowing and the wealth of career opportunities that are opened with a science, mathematics, or engineering degree make these fields extremely attractive options. She will outline the many ways the National Science Foundation is working to create opportunities and increase the numbers of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Finally, she will address the recently discovered, unusual bonus to women of a career in science: immortality.

Background

It must have surprised the Chatham College graduating class of 2003 to hear their commencement speaker, Dr. Kathie Olsen, one of their own, tell how a single Chatham biology class changed her life. Dr. Olsen confessed that when she was in high school she actually hated science, though she loved math. "Inscribed on my high school entrance doors were the words: 'What you are to be, you are now becoming.' I KNEW I wasn't going to become a scientist," said the person who in fact not only went on to a rewarding career in neuroscience research and education but later in life became one of the most influential science policy makers in the country. As NASA's Chief Scientist in 1999-2002, Dr. Olsen served as the senior scientific advisor to NASA's administrator. In 2002, she was confirmed by the U.S. senate as the Associate Director for White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy. In that capacity, she advised the President on science & technology and provided leadership and coordination for the government's science and education policy including physical sciences, life sciences, environmental science, and behavioral and social sciences. Currently, she is the Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation.

Admission is free. Please RSVP online to reserve a spot.

http://university.gsfc.nasa.gov/mos/

For questions contact us by phone at 301-286-2893/ 9690 or by email at LRana@pop600.gsfc.nasa.gov